

Remarks

The following is a response to the Office Action dated May 4, 2006.

Per the above amendment, claims 1-4, 6-10, 14-16 and 23-27 have been canceled. Claims 5, 17, 18 and 28 have been amended. And new claims 29-44 have been added.

Claims 5 and 28 were amended to incorporate the subject matter of the independent claims to which they depend, as those claims were objected to. Having done so, it is believed that claims 5 and 28 should be formally allowed along with previously allowed claims 11-13.

Claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kobayashi et al. (US 6,719,737) in combination with Landis (US 5,490,841).

Claim 17 has been amended to recite the needle sheath to include an internal spline and the needle hub to include adjacent arms that form a slot. The needle hub 20 of Kobayashi has ribs 28. However, these ribs 28 are used to help to facilitate the centering and mounting of the collar 50 on the hub (column 5, lines 5-17). Whether such ribs 28 could be considered to be arms that are equivalent to those (32, 34) formed in the hub of the instant invention as shown in Fig. 2 is open to question. Moreover, the sheath defined in claim 17 now has an internal spline that is fittable to a slot formed by adjacent pairs of arms at the distal portion of the needle hub. There is no such spline present in the needle protector of the Kobayashi device. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 17 is patentable over the prior art, and that claim 17, as well as claims 18-22 which depend therefrom and which the examiner previously noted as containing allowable subject matter, should also be formally allowed.

Newly added independent claim 29 recites a needle hub that has first and second sets of arms extending transversely from its distal portion and a set of flanges that extend


transversely from its proximal portion. Claim 29 recites a needle sheath having an internal spline forming at its inner surface that fits to the slot formed by the first set of arms so that the needle hub is rotatable in the same direction in unison with the sheath when the sheath is attached to the needle hub. Such features are not taught by Kobayashi, or any of the prior art references cited in the Office Action.

Newly added claim 36 specifically recites the structure of the needle hub of the instant invention to include first and second plurality of spaced apart flanges to which a collar is rotatably mounted about, and a set of arms that extend at the distal portion of the needle hub to form a slot for accepting a spline formed at the internal surface of a needle sheath when the sheath is coupled to the collar. The distal portion of the claimed needle hub further has a second set of arms that act as a catch to the spline formed at the internal surface of a housing pivotally connected to the collar after the sheath has been removed from the collar and the housing has been positioned to cover the needle. None of these features are disclosed by the prior art.

Newly added method claim 39 likewise sets forth structures in both the needle hub and the needle sheath that are not taught by the prior art.

In view of the above, the examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the application and pass the case to issue at an early date.

Respectfully submitted,



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